BIRD CALENDAR – 1927 – 23RD YEAR

Bulletin No. 2 April 1 – May 1

At the present rate of increase and distribution the starlings will have taken possession of the whole of the United States, as well as the rest of habitable North America in another quarter or half century. Chapman tells us that the only American representative of the sixty species of true Starlings distributed throughout the Old World "was introduced into this country in 1890". Mr. Eugene Schieffelin who has the unenviable reputation of having imported one of the early shipments of house or "English Sparrows" into America, released sixty Starlings in Central Park, New York City, in 1890, and forty more in 1891.

The descendents of these some hundred Starling colonists have already overrun the eastern states. Moreover, even the casual lover and observer of birds will find them pretty well distributed throughout western Pennsylvania and Ohio, and they have no doubt already begun to invade Illinois and Indiana. In as much as this long familiar English bird is soon destined to number its millions among our own native bird friends, and already numbers its hundreds who spend the entire year in and around Cleveland, it behooves all Bird-lovers to learn all they can easily about this hardy, thrifty, and interesting, not to say beautiful, interloper.

Sturnus vulgaris, the common Starling, has, with the House Sparrow and the Rook, long been one of the best known members of the feathered tribe to the human dwellers in English cities, from London on down. They are rather elegant, if not quite striking, in appearance. In Chapman's description the adults in summer are "metallic purplish or greenish; feathers of the upper parts are tipped with cream-buff spots, feathers of the under parts marked only on the sides; lower belly and under tail-coverts, wings, and tail dark brownish gray, edged with cream-buff; bill yellow". The only noticeable differences between the Starling's summer and winter dress are to be found in "the upper parts heavily spotted with brownish cream-buff; the entire under parts heavily spotted with white; bill blackish brown"; length 8.50 (see Frank M. Chapman, Birds of North America, Revised Ed. New York, 1926, p. 355f.) The Starling is continually being mistaken by careless observers in this country for one or the other species of our own "blackbird".

The Starling is not only attractive and pleasing in appearance, but at times he expresses his joy in life through a variety of sweet, musical notes. His somewhat harsh, shrill call is already becoming one of the most familiar bird notes in Wade Park, especially in the dead of winter and early Spring. The Starling seems, moreover, to have considerable skill in imitating the notes of other birds. Several times during recent weeks the writer has been surprised to hear above in the high trees of Wade Park the clear well-defined (but very delicate) call (generally repeated several times) of the Red-shouldered Hawk, the Bob White, the Wood Pewee, and others. Last year one observer reported a Wood

Pewee several weeks too early, and the mystery was not solved until a few weeks ago, when the Wood Pewee note was heard several times, and definitely traced to Starlings.

The Starlings of Cleveland seem to get along beautifully with their genuine American winter and spring cousins. Though they have established themselves in the holes of several large trees – high up – in Wade Park and seem to occupy their nests or houses both winter and summer, they have not yet disturbed either the Red-headed Woodpecker of the Flickers, their greatest rivals for tree-holes as nesting places, as is shown by large numbers [of] the two latter now present and nesting in the Park. But one cannot easily foretell what may happen in these and other disagreeable respects, when the present hundreds of Starlings in our parks give way to tens of thousands and even millions.

The great naturalist W.H. Hudson calls the Starling "really a splendid bird as birds are with us in this distant northern land – splendid in his spangled glossy dress of metallic, purple green, and brown, a singer it is always pleasant to listen to – he sings throughout the year; on any autumn or winter day, a small company or flock of a dozen or two of birds may be found in any park containing large trees, and it is a delight that never grows stale to listen to the musical conversation, or concert of curiously contrasting sounds, perpetually going on among them; the airy whistle, the various chirps, the clink-clink as of a cracked bell, the low chatter of mixed harsh and musical sounds, the kissing and finger-cracking, and those long metallic notes, as of a saw being filed not unmusically, or (as a friend suggests) as of milking a cow in a tin pail; however familiar you may be with the starling, you cannot listen to one of their choirs without hearing some new sound. There is more variety in the Starling than in any other species, and not only in his language; if you observe him closely for a short time, he will treat you to a sudden and surprising transformation. Watch him when absorbed in his own music, especially when emitting his favorite saw-filing or milking-a-cow-in-a-tin-pail sounds; he tremble on his perch – shivers as if with cold – his feathers puffed out, his wings hanging as if broken, his beak wide open, and the long painted feathers of his swollen throat projected like a ragged beard. He is then a most forlorn-looking object, apparently broken up, and falling to pieces; in the twinkling of an eye he is once more transformed to the neat glossy, alert starling." (Birds in London, Dent 1924, p.86 ff.)

The following list comprises all the birds reported as observed during the 31 days from April 1st to May 1st inclusive:

43. Vesper Sparrow; March 31, Dean Bailey, Lake View; April 3-8 (several), Saegartown, Pa.; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island; April 30, Professor Finfrock, Southwest Cleveland.
44. Turkey Buzzard; April 1, Professor Finfrock, Gates Mill.
45. American Eagle; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
46. American Merganser; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
47. Bonaparte Gull; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
48. Common Tern; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.

49. Coot; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
50. Cow Bird; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island; April 5 (several), Saegartown, Pa.; April 9, Dean Bailey, Lake View. Several seen since in Wade Park.
51. Great Blue Heron; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
52. Horned Lark; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
53. Loon; April 4 (3), Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
54. Red-shouldered Hawk; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
55. Rusty Blackbird; April 4, Professor Visscher, Kelly's Island.
56. Hermit Thrush; April 9, Dean Bailey, Lake View; April 17, same place; April 20 (2), Wade Park; April 30, Professor Finfrock, southwest Cleveland.
57. White-throated Sparrow; April 9, Dean Bailey, Lake View; April 19, Miss Barrow, Wade Park; May 1, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights.
58. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; April 11, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights; April 12, Wade Park.
59. Brown Thrasher; April 16, Dean Bailey, Lake View; April 17, Professor Herrick, Noble Road; same date, Lake View; April 23, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights.
60. Purple Finch; April 16, Dean Bailey, Lake View.
61. Purple Martin; April 16, Professor Herrick, Noble Road; April 19, (2-3) Lower Shaker Lake.
62. White-crowned Sparrow; April 16, Dean Bailey, Lake View.
63. Marsh Hawk; April 17, Upper Shaker Lake.
64. Ruby-crowned Kinglet; April 17, Lake View.
65. Myrtle Warbler; April 18-19, Wade Park; April 24, Dean Bailey, Lake View.
66. Veery; April 19, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights; May 1, Dean Bailey, Lake View.
67. American Goldfinch; April 19, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights; May 1, Donald Hulme, Joplin's Woods.
68. Cat Bird; April 10, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights.
69. Chipping Sparrow; April 20, Adelberet Campus; same date, Donald Hulme, Adelbert Athletic Field and Wade Park.
70. Northern Shrike; April 24, Professor Finfrock, Bedford, Ohio.
71. Wood Thrush; April 24, Dean Bailey, Lake View.
72. Barn Swallow; April 27 (3), Wade Park; April 30, Professor Finfrock, Southwest Cleveland.
73. Cliff Swallow; May 1 (several), Donald Hulme, Willoughby.
74. Grasshopper Sparrow; April 30, Professor Finfrock, Southwest Cleveland.
75. House Wren; April 21, Professor Herrick, Noble Road; April 30, Professor Finfrock, Oak Road, Cleveland Heights; May 1, Donald Hulme, Willoughby.
76. Lesser Yellowlegs; April 30, Professor Finfrock, Southwest Cleveland.
77. Olive-backed Thrush; April 30, Lake View. Many seen since in Wade Park and elsewhere.
78. Solitary Sandpiper; April 30, Professor Finfrock, southwest Cleveland.
79. Tree Swallow; April 30, Professor Finfrock, southwest Cleveland.
80. Yellow Palm Warbler; May 1, Donald Hulme, Joplin's Woods.
81. Yellow Warbler; May 1, Donald Hulme, Willoughby.
82. Tennessee Warbler; May 1, Dean Bailey, Lake View.